

*In the Claims*

1. **(Currently Amended)** A method comprising:  
comparing first security level information and second security level information,  
wherein  
said first security level information represents a first security level,  
said second security level information represents a second security  
level,  
said first security level information is stored in a security label of a packet  
received at a network node of a network, [[and]]  
said second security level information is stored at said network node, after  
being received from another network node of said network,  
said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,  
said network nodes comprise said network node and said another  
network node, and  
said network nodes are configured to convey packets to one another  
via others of said network nodes; and  
indicating processing to be performed on said packet based on said comparing,  
wherein  
said processing comprises  
determining whether to forward said packet from said network  
node to one of said network nodes.
2. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein  
~~said first security level information represents a first security level, and~~  
~~said second security level information represents a second security level,~~  
~~said another network node is coupled to a destination of said packet, and~~  
~~said destination is assigned said second security level.~~
3. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein  
said first security level and said second security level implement one of a multi-  
level security paradigm and a multi-lateral security paradigm.

4. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein said security label is one of an enumerated security label and a bitmap security label.

5. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein said second security level is a security level of a port of said network node.

6. **(Original)** The method of claim 5, further comprising: setting said security level of said port.

7. **(Original)** The method of claim 6, wherein said setting said security level of said port comprises:

storing said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

8. **(Original)** The method of claim 6, wherein said setting said security level of said port comprises:

storing said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

9. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein said processing comprises:

dropping said packet, if said comparing indicates that said first security level is less than said second security level.

10. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, wherein said processing comprises at least one of dropping said packet, redirecting said packet and rewriting said security label.

11. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein  
~~said first security level information represents a first security level, and~~  
said second security level information represents a plurality of security levels,  
**and**

**said security levels comprise said second security level.**

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein  
said security levels are a range of security levels.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein said processing  
comprises:

dropping said packet, if said comparing indicates that said first security level is  
not within said range of security levels.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
storing said second security level information at said network node.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said storing comprises:  
storing said second security level in a security label information field of an access  
control list entry.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said storing comprises:  
storing said second security level in a label range information field of a  
forwarding table entry.

17. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said storing comprises:  
communicating said second security level from a first network node by registering  
said second security level in a context.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein said registering  
comprises:  
updating said second security level information by logically OR'ing third security  
level information with said second security level information.

19. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein  
said context is a generic attribute registration protocol information propagation  
context, and

said registering said second security level is accomplished by said first network node issuing a join request.

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said storing comprises: storing said second security level in a label range information field of forwarding table.

21. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein said storing comprises: storing said second security level in a port of said network node.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein said port is an egress port.

23. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, further comprising:  
    determining said first security level.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein said determining comprises:  
    determining if an ingress port is marked as an access port; and  
    setting a security level of said ingress port to said first security level, if said ingress port is marked as an access port.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, further comprising:  
    setting said first security level information to said security level of said ingress port.

26. (Original) The method of claim 23, further comprising:  
    authenticating a user having said first security level, wherein  
    said determining is performed only if said user is authenticated.

27. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim [[2]] 1, further comprising:  
    performing said processing on said packet based on said comparing.

28. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim 27, wherein said performing said processing comprises:

**performing said** forwarding **of** said packet, if said indicating indicates that said packet is allowed to be forwarded; and dropping said packet, otherwise.

29. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein said performing said processing comprises:

forwarding said packet to a firewall, if said indicating indicates that said packet should be forwarded to said firewall.

30. **(Currently Amended)** The method of claim **[[2]] 1**, further comprising:

stripping network security information from said packet; and adding subnetwork security information to said packet.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein said network security information comprises said first security level information.

32. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein said subnetwork security information comprises said first security level information.

33. **(Currently Amended)** A computer system comprising:  
a processor;  
**a computer-readable storage** medium coupled to said processor; and computer **[[code]] instructions**, encoded in said computer-readable **storage** medium, configured to cause said processor to:  
compare first security level information and second security level information, wherein  
**said first security level information represents a first security level,**

said second security level information represents a second security level,

said first security level information is stored in a security label of a packet received at a network node of a network, [[and]] said second security level information is stored at said network node, after being received from another network node of said network,

said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,  
said network nodes comprise said network node and said another network node, and

said network nodes are configured to convey packets to one another via others of said network nodes; and

indicate processing to be performed on said packet based on said comparing, wherein  
said processing comprises  
determining whether to forward said packet from said network node to one of said network nodes.

34. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim 33, wherein  
~~said first security level information represents a first security level, and~~  
~~said second security level information represents a second security level,~~  
~~said another network node is coupled to a destination of said packet, and~~  
~~said destination is assigned said second security level.~~

35. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim [[34]] 33, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:

set said security level of a port, wherein  
said second security level is a security level of said port of said network node.

36. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 35, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to set said security level of said port is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

37. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 35, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to set said security level of said port is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

38. **(Cancelled)**

39. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 33, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:  
store said second security level information at said network node.

40. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 39, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to store is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

41. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 39, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to store is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

42. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 39, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to store is further configured to cause said processor to:

communicate said second security level from a first network node by virtue of being configure to cause said processor to register said second security level in a context.

43. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 42, wherein said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to register is further configured to cause said processor to:

update said second security level information by virtue of being configure to cause said processor to logically OR third security level information with said second security level information.

44. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 43, wherein said context is a generic attribute registration protocol information propagation context, and

said computer [[code]] instructions configured to cause said processor to register said second security level is configured to cause said processor to cause said first network node to issue a join request.

45. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim [[34]] 33, wherein said computer code is instructions are further configured to cause said processor to:

determine said first security level.

46. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 45, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:  
authenticate a user having said first security level, wherein  
said computer ~~[[code]] instructions~~ configured to cause said processor to  
determine said first security level causes said processor to  
determine said first security level only if said user is authenticated.

47. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 45, wherein said computer ~~[[code]] instructions~~ configured to cause said processor to determine said first security level is further configured to cause said processor to:  
determine if an ingress port is marked as an access port; and  
set a security level of said ingress port to said first security level, if said ingress port is marked as an access port.

48. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 47, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:  
set said first security level information to said security level of said ingress port.

49. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim ~~[[34]] 33~~, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:  
perform said processing on said packet based on a result generated by said computer ~~[[code]] instructions~~ configured to cause said processor to compare.

50. **(Currently Amended)** The computer system of claim 49, wherein said computer ~~[[code]] instructions~~ configured to cause said processor to perform said processing on said packet is further configured to cause said processor to:  
perform said forwarding of said packet, if said computer ~~[[code]] instructions~~ configured to cause said processor to indicate indicates that said packet is allowed to be forwarded; and  
drop said packet, otherwise.

51. (Currently Amended) The computer system of claim [[34]] 33, wherein said computer ~~code is instructions are~~ further configured to cause said processor to:

strip network security information from said packet; and  
add subnetwork security information to said packet.

52. (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising:  
a plurality of sets of instructions, comprising

a first set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to compare first security level information and second security level information, wherein

said first security level information represents a first security level,

said second security level information represents a second security level,

said first security level information is stored in a security label of a packet received at a network node of a network, [[and]]

said second security level information is stored at said network node [[;]] , after being received from another network node of said network,

said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,

said network nodes comprise said network node and said another network node, and

said network nodes are configured to convey packets to one another via others of said network nodes, and

a second set of instructions, executable on said computer system,

configured to indicate processing to be performed on said packet based on said comparing, wherein

said processing comprises

determining whether to forward said packet from said network node to one of said network nodes; and

a computer-readable storage [[media]] medium, wherein said sets of instructions are encoded in said computer-readable [[media]] medium.

53. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 52, wherein

~~said first security level information represents a first security level, and  
said second security level information represents a second security level.  
said another network node is coupled to a destination of said packet, and  
said destination is assigned said second security level.~~

54. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim [[53]] 52, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to set  
said security level of a port, wherein  
said second security level is a security level of said port of said network  
node.

55. (Original) The computer program product of claim 54, wherein said  
third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to  
store said second security level in a security label information field of an  
access control list entry.

56. (Original) The computer program product of claim 54, wherein said  
third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to  
store said second security level in a label range information field of a  
forwarding table entry.

57. (Cancelled)

58. (Original) The computer program product of claim 52, further  
comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to store  
said second security level information at said network node.

59. (Original) The computer program product of claim 58, wherein said third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to store said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

60. (Original) The computer program product of claim 58, wherein said third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to store said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

61. (Original) The computer program product of claim 58, wherein said third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to communicate said second security level from a first network node comprises a first sub-subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to cause said processor to register said second security level in a context.

62. (Original) The computer program product of claim 61, wherein said first sub-subset of instructions comprises:

a first sub-sub-subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to update said second security level information comprises a first sub-sub-sub-subset of instructions, executable on said computer system configure to cause said processor to logically OR third security level information with said second security level information.

63. (Original) The computer program product of claim 62, wherein said context is a generic attribute registration protocol information propagation context, and

said first sub-subset of instructions is further configured to cause said first network node to issue a join request.

64. **(Currently Amended)** The computer program product of claim [[53]] 52, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to determine said first security level.

65. (Original) The computer program product of claim 64, further comprising:

a fourth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to authenticate a user having said first security level, wherein said third set of instructions is further configured to cause said processor to determine said first security level only if said user is authenticated.

66. (Original) The computer program product of claim 64, wherein said third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to determine if an ingress port is marked as an access port; and a second subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to set a security level of said ingress port to said first security level, if said ingress port is marked as an access port.

67. (Original) The computer program product of claim 66, further comprising:

a fifth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to set said first security level information to said security level of said ingress port.

68. **(Currently Amended)** The computer program product of claim [[53]] 52, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to perform said processing on said packet based on a result generated by said first set of instructions.

69. **(Currently Amended)** The computer program product of claim 68, wherein said third set of instructions comprises:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to perform said forwarding of said packet, if said second set of instructions indicates that said packet is allowed to be forwarded; and

a second subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to drop said packet, otherwise.

70. **(Currently Amended)** The computer program product of claim [[53]] 52, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to strip network security information from said packet; and

a fourth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to add subnetwork security information to said packet.

71. **(Currently Amended)** An apparatus comprising:

a network interface;

means for comparing first security level information and second security level information, wherein

said first security level information represents a first security level,  
said second security level information represents a second security  
level,

said means for comparing is coupled to said network interface,

said first security level information is stored in a security label of a packet received at a network node of a network, [[and]]

said second security level information is stored at said network node, after  
being received from another network node of said network,  
said network comprises a plurality of network nodes.

said network nodes comprise said network node and said another network node, and  
said network nodes are configured to convey packets to one another via others of said network nodes; and  
means for indicating processing to be performed on said packet based on said comparing, wherein  
said means for indicating is coupled to said means for comparing, and  
said processing comprises  
determining whether to forward said packet from said network node to one of said network nodes.

72. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 71, wherein  
~~said first security level information represents a first security level, and~~  
~~said second security level information represents a second security level.~~  
said another network node is coupled to a destination of said packet, and  
said destination is assigned said second security level.

73. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[72]] 71, further comprising:  
means for setting said security level of a port, wherein  
said second security level is a security level of said port of said network node.

74. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73, wherein said means for setting said security level of said port comprises:  
means for storing said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

75. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73, wherein said means for setting said security level of said port comprises:

means for storing said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

76. **(Cancelled)**

77. (Original) The apparatus of claim 71, further comprising:  
means for storing said second security level information at said network node.

78. (Original) The apparatus of claim 77, wherein said means for storing comprises:

means for storing said second security level in a security label information field of an access control list entry.

79. (Original) The apparatus of claim 77, wherein said means for storing comprises:

means for storing said second security level in a label range information field of a forwarding table entry.

80. (Original) The apparatus of claim 77, wherein said means for storing comprises:

means for communicating said second security level from a first network node comprising means for registering said second security level in a context.

81. (Original) The apparatus of claim 80, wherein said means for registering comprises:

means for updating said second security level information comprising means for logically OR'ing third security level information with said second security level information.

82. (Original) The apparatus of claim 81, wherein  
said context is a generic attribute registration protocol information propagation  
context, and  
said means for registering said second security level comprises means for causing  
said first network node to issue a join request.

83. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus of claim [[72]] 71, further  
comprising:  
means for determining said first security level.

84. (Original) The apparatus of claim 83, further comprising:  
means for authenticating a user having said first security level, wherein  
said means for determining is performed only if said user is authenticated.

85. (Original) The apparatus of claim 83, wherein said means for  
determining comprises:  
means for determining if an ingress port is marked as an access port; and  
means for setting a security level of said ingress port to said first security level, if  
said ingress port is marked as an access port.

86. (Original) The apparatus of claim 85, further comprising:  
means for setting said first security level information to said security level of said  
ingress port.

87. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus of claim [[72]] 71, further  
comprising:  
means for performing said processing on said packet, wherein said means for  
performing said processing uses a result generated by said means for  
comparing.

88. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus of claim 87, wherein said performing said means for processing comprises:

means for performing said forwarding of said packet, if said means for indicating indicates that said packet is allowed to be forwarded; and means for dropping said packet, otherwise.

89. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus of claim [[72]] 71, further comprising:

means for stripping network security information from said packet; and means for adding subnetwork security information to said packet.

90. **(Currently Amended)** A network device comprising:  
a network interface, wherein

    said network interface is configured to receive a packet, and  
    said network device is configured to

        store first security level information,

compare said first security level information and second security level information, wherein  
        said first security level information represents a first security level,  
        said second security level information represents a second security level,  
        said second security level information is stored in a security label of a packet received at said network device, after being received from another network node of said network,  
        said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,  
        said network nodes comprise said network node and  
        said another network node, and

said network nodes are configured to convey packets to  
one another via others of said network nodes,  
and  
indicate processing to be performed on said packet based on  
said comparing, wherein  
said processing comprises  
determining whether to forward said packet  
from said network node to one of said  
network nodes, and [[to]]  
perform said processing of said packet using said first security  
level information.

91. (Original) The network device of claim 90, wherein  
said network interface comprises a port, and  
said port is configured to store said first security level information.

92. (Original) The network device of claim 91, wherein  
said port is an egress port.

93. (Original) The network device of claim 91, wherein  
said network device is further configured to set a security level of said port.

94.-95. (Cancelled)

96. (Currently Amended) The network device of claim [[95]] 90,  
wherein  
said network device is further configured to process said packet based on said  
comparing.

97. (Currently Amended) The network device of claim [[95]] 90,  
wherein

said network device is further configured to strip network security information from said packet and add subnetwork security information to said packet.

98.    **(Currently Amended)**    The network device of claim [[95]] **90**,  
    wherein

        said first security level is a security level of a port of said network device.

99.    **(Currently Amended)**    The network device of claim [[94]] **90**,  
    wherein

        said second security level information represents a second security level, and  
        said first security level information represents a plurality of security levels.

100.    (Original)    The network device of claim 99, wherein  
        said security levels are a range of security levels.

101.    **(Currently Amended)**    The network device of claim [[95]] **90**,  
    wherein

        said network device is further configured to store said first security level  
        information at said network device.

102.    (Original)    The network device of claim 101, wherein  
        said network device is further configured to communicate said first security level  
        from a second network device by registering said first security level in a  
        context.

103.    (Original)    The network device of claim 102, wherein  
        said context is a generic attribute registration protocol information propagation  
        context, and  
        said registering said first security level is accomplished by said second network  
        device issuing a join request.

104.    **(Currently Amended)**    A network device comprising:

a content-addressable memory; and  
an access control list, wherein

    said content-addressable memory is configured to store said access control  
    list,

    said access control list comprises an access control list entry,  
    said access control list entry comprises a label information field, [[**and**]]  
    said label information field is configured to store a security label, **and**  
**said network device is configured to**

**compare first security level information and second security  
level information, wherein**

**said first security level information represents a first  
security level,**

**said second security level information represents a  
second security level,**

**said first security level information is stored in a  
security label of a packet received at a network  
node of a network,**

**said second security level information is stored at said  
network node, after being received from another  
network node of said network,**

**said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,  
said network nodes comprise said network node and  
said another network node, and**

**said network nodes are configured to convey packets to  
one another via others of said network nodes;  
and**

**indicate processing to be performed on said packet based on  
said comparing, wherein  
said processing comprises**

**determining whether to forward said packet**  
**from said network node to one of said**  
**network nodes.**

105. (Original) The network device of claim 104, wherein said security label implements a multi-level security paradigm.

106. (Original) The network device of claim 104, wherein said security label implements a multi-lateral security paradigm.

107. (Original) The network device of claim 104, wherein said access control list entry further comprises:  
a flow label field, wherein  
said flow label field allows said access control list entry to be identified as  
a security labeled access control list entry.

108. (Original) The network device of claim 107, wherein said access control list entry further comprises:  
a plurality of flow specification fields, wherein  
said flow specification fields comprise information identifying processing to be performed on at least one flow.

109. (Original) The network device of claim 104, wherein said security label is configured to be compared to a security label of a packet.

110. (Original) The network device of claim 109, wherein said access control list entry further comprises:  
a flow specification field, wherein  
said flow specification field comprise information identifying processing to be performed on said packet.

111. (Original) The network device of claim 110, wherein said access control list entry further comprises:

a flow label field, wherein

    said flow label field allows said access control list entry to be identified as a security labeled access control list entry.

112. **(Currently Amended)** A network device comprising:

a forwarding table, wherein

    said forwarding table comprises a plurality of forwarding table entries,

    [[and]]

    at least one forwarding table entry of said forwarding table entries

        comprises a label range field, and

said network device is configured to

compare first security level information and second security

level information, wherein

said first security level information represents a first  
        security level,

said second security level information represents a  
        second security level,

said first security level information is stored in a  
        security label of a packet received at a network  
        node of a network,

said second security level information is stored at said  
        network node, after being received from another  
        network node of said network,

said network comprises a plurality of network nodes,  
        said network nodes comprise said network node and  
        said another network node, and

said network nodes are configured to convey packets to  
        one another via others of said network nodes;  
        and

**indicate processing to be performed on said packet based on**  
**said comparing, wherein**  
**said processing comprises**  
**determining whether to forward said packet**  
**from said network node to one of said**  
**network nodes.**

113. (Original) The network device of claim 112, wherein said at least one forwarding table entry further comprises:

a port identifier field, wherein

a port identifier stored in said port identifier field identifies a port.

114. (Original) The network device of claim 113, wherein

a security label stored in said label range field is associated with said port.

115. (Original) The network device of claim 113, wherein said at least one forwarding table entry further comprises:

a media access control (MAC) address field; and

a virtual local area network (VLAN) identifier field, wherein

a combination of said MAC address field and said VLAN identifier field are associated with said port identifier field and said label range field.

116. (Previously Presented) The network device of claim 115, wherein

said address field is configured to store a MAC address,

said VLAN identifier field is configured to store a VLAN identifier,

said VLAN identifier identifies a VLAN, and

a combination of said MAC address and said VLAN identifier identify said port and said security label.

117. (Original) The network device of claim 114, wherein said at least one forwarding table entry further comprises:

a media access control (MAC) address field configured to store a MAC address,  
wherein  
said MAC address is associated with a security label stored in said label  
range field.

118. (Original) The network device of claim 112, wherein said at least one  
forwarding table entry further comprises:  
a virtual local area network (VLAN) identifier field, wherein  
a VLAN identifier stored in said VLAN identifier field identifies a VLAN,  
and  
said VLAN is associated with a security label stored in said label range field.